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LT. GOVERNOR BROWN CELEBRATES EARTH DAY BY OPENING A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER

Learning Facility is Part of $153 Million Restoration of Contaminated Baltimore Waterfront

BALTIMORE, MD (April 22, 2009**) –** With a quick snip of the scissors, Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown, along with community leaders and area elected officials, officially opened the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center. The center is part of a $153 million restoration project that is transforming one of Baltimore Harbor's most contaminated sites into an area that will benefit wildlife, local residents and the port industry.

"This restoration project is clearly one of the great environmental success stories in Maryland," said Lt. Governor Brown. "Building this wonderful education center is truly remarkable when you consider that one year ago this site was covered with thousands of tons of trash and debris. Instead of being a place to avoid, Masonville Cove is now a place to learn about and enjoy the environment. This project is a great example of the Governor's Smart, Green and Growing Initiative."

The Maryland: Smart, Green & Growing initiative is a multi-agency, Statewide initiative to help Maryland achieve a more sustainable future by linking community revitalization, transportation improvements, economic development, smart growth and environmental restoration efforts. The Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center brings together many of the goals of this key initiative into one project.

The Education Center has been designated a "near-zero, net-energy" building, which highlights its achievement in using the latest environmental advances to operate the building. Some key green features of the building are: a ground-source air conditioning system that is projected to use about half the energy that a conventional building uses; solar energy power; rain barrels that collect roof rain runoff to water greenery and flowers; a reflective roof that decreases the amount of heat transferred into the building; and an energy recovery ventilator where exhaust air is used to heat or cool fresh air using a heat exchanger, making ventilation more efficient. -MORE-

The building is designed to be 74 percent more efficient than a conventionally designed building of the same size. Citizens and students from local schools will be the key groups taking advantage of the environmental education center. The Living Classrooms Foundation and the National Aquarium in Baltimore will be developing and running the education programs for the center.

"This extraordinary project makes clear that there is nothing we can't do when we are creative and committed to a worthy purpose," said Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon. "The Masonville Center fulfills many of the goals I have for the entire city. The removal of tens of thousands of pounds of debris makes the site cleaner; the creation of a wildlife preserve and the construction of an Environmental Education Center make the city greener; and the addition of biker and hiker trails will make us healthier."

The environmental education center is part of a larger restoration project of more than 54 acres of shoreline along the Patapsco River's Middle Branch near the Brooklyn and Curtis Bay communities. Other components of the project include: a new environmental park and wildlife area; a series of hiker-biker trails that will provide local residents access to the Patapsco River at Masonville Cove; a boat ramp limited to non-power boats including kayaks and canoes; improvements to stream and fish habitat; and trash interceptors that will keep storm water runoff trash from entering Baltimore Harbor. Maryland Environmental Services is managing the project.

The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) has been working on the project with the members of the Concerned Citizens for a Better Brooklyn and the Brooklyn-Curtis Bay Coalition. Since the beginning, representatives told the MPA that one of their reasons for supporting this initiative was to show their children the importance of caring for the environment. One of the Coalition's top priorities is to provide residents easy access to enjoy the Chesapeake Bay.

"The opening of the Masonville Cove Center is a major step forward for the communities of Brooklyn and Curtis Bay," said Carol Kefford Eshelman, executive director of Baybrook. "Our children will have a first-hand opportunity to learn about the Bay and how their daily activities affect the health of the Bay. The opening of the Masonville Cove will also have a broader impact for the communities as more people learn about the charms and conveniences of Brooklyn and Curtis Bay."

The Masonville restoration project dovetails with the Port of Baltimore's need to keep the shipping channels in the Chesapeake Bay dredged and to have dredge placement facilities. The most well-known dredge placement project is Poplar Island in the Chesapeake Bay. Located 34 miles south of Baltimore, Poplar Island has been recognized as a national model for habitat restoration via dredged material, which has been pulled from the approach to Baltimore Harbor and placed at Poplar since 2001.

Two years ago, the Board of Public Works (BPW) cleared the way for Masonville Cove to become the new dredged material placement site, wetland park and the new environmental center. At that time, BPW issued a tidal wetlands license to the MPA to construct the dredged material containment facility at Masonville.

In 2007, the MPA began the project's massive clean up. More than 61,000 tons of trash and debris have been removed. Some of the debris dates back more than a century to the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904. To date, the clean-up has included the removal of:

- 306,074 gallons of petroleum-tainted water;
- 17,398 tons of timber;
- 6,588 tons of concrete rubble;
- 5,265 feet of electrical wire; and
- 4,047 pounds of PCB-containing electrical equipment.

Besides trash, there also are 27 abandoned vessels being remediated or removed from the water at the site. The site is the former home of Kurt Iron and Metal and the Maryland Shipbuilding and Drydock Company. -MORE-

"Living Classrooms is excited to be expanding programming opportunities to the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center that are educational, recreational and vocational for residents of the Brooklyn, Curtis Bay and Cherry Hill communities, " said Scott Raymond, vice president of education for the Living Classrooms Foundation. "These programs utilize Living Classrooms "Learning by Doing" hands-on approach to work with students and residents within their own urban neighborhoods to address important environmental issues, to examine their own attitudes and behaviors, and to seek solutions to these problems."

"Through our wetland programs, thousands of young people have contributed to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay tidal wetlands, and we are excited to be giving the Masonville Cove students this same opportunity," commented David Nemerson, conservation biologist at the National Aquarium. "Wetlands are essential to the vitality of the Chesapeake Bay and by involving young people in projects that are in their own backyard, we hope they make the important connection between water and land and develop a vested interest in protecting the Bay for future generations."

In December 2007, the Masonville restoration project was awarded the 2007 Mayor's Business Recognition award. The Greater Baltimore Committee gives this award annually to organizations that have demonstrated outstanding community service and significantly improved the City of Baltimore.

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